44

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for use in marketing, comprising:

detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, the product purchase information including price information, the remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including at least one item; and

in response to receiving the shopping list initiating communication, to the customer by the remote computer, of price information associated with the at least one item on the shopping list for the plurality of retail stores.

2.   The method of Claim 1, wherein initiating communication comprises transmitting an electronic mail message for receipt by the customer.

3.   The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, comprises receiving product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores on a substantially real-time basis.

4.   The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving a shopping list of a customer comprises receiving an electronic mail message including the at least one item.

5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving a shopping list of a customer comprises receiving information from the customer over the Internet.

6.   The   method   of   Claim   5,   wherein   receiving information from the customer over the Internet comprises receiving information inputted into a web page associated with the remote computer.

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7.   The method of Claim 1, and further comprising storing product purchase information from the plurality of retail stores in association with customer identification numbers.

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8.   The method of Claim 7, and further comprising transmitting to the customer a proposed shopping list prior to receiving the shopping list including at least one item.

15   9.   The   method   of   Claim   8,   wherein the proposed shopping list comprises products previously purchased by the customer.

10.   The   method   of   Claim   8,   wherein   the   proposed
20   shopping list comprises products previously purchased by the   customer   in   the   customer's   most   recent   shopping transaction with one of the retail stores.

11.   The method of Claim 1, and further comprising
25   initiating,   by   the   remote   computer,   communication   of   an incentive   associated   with   the   at   least   one   item   to   the customer in response to receiving the shopping list.

12.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive
30   comprises a discount on the at least one item.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive comprises a discount on a product competitive with the at least one item

14. The method of Claim 13, and further comprises comparing, by the computer, the price of the at least one item at a first one of the plurality of retail stores to the price of the competitive item at the first retail store, the price of the at least one item and the competitive item at the first retail store determined from the product purchase information, and wherein the incentive comprises a discount sufficient to lower the effective price on the competitive item to match or beat the price of the at least one item.

15. The method of Claim 13, wherein the price of the competitive item comprises the price at which the competitive item was purchased within an hour of the receipt of the shopping list.

16. The method of Claim 11, and further comprising comparing, by the computer, the price of the at least one item at a first one of the plurality of retail stores to the lowest price at which the at least one item was purchased from the first retail store within a predetermined time period, the lowest price determined from the product purchase information, and wherein the incentive comprises a discount sufficient to lower the effective price at the first retail store on the at least one item to match or beat the lowest price.

17.   The method of Claim 16, wherein the predetermined time period is approximately one hour from the receipt of the shopping list.

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18.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive comprises a redeemable coupon.

19.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive comprises a notification of a future electronic discount.

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20.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive comprises a redeemable coupon on a product determined to be a product more frequently purchased the customer than other products purchased by the customer.

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21.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive is based on prior purchases of the customer.

22.   The method of Claim 11, wherein the incentive is
20   based on the shopping list.

23.   The method of Claim 22, wherein the incentive comprises a discount on a product associated with the at least one item.

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24.   The method of Claim 23, wherein the product is a companion product to the at least one item.

25.   A system comprising a computer for coupling to at
least one retail store, the computer comprising:

     a processor;

     a memory accessible by the processor; and

     a computer program stored in the memory, the
computer program operable to be executed on the
processor and further operable to:

          detect product purchase information from
the at least one retail store, the product
purchase information including price information;

          receive a shopping list of a customer, the
shopping list including at least one item; and

          in response to receiving the shopping list,
initiate communication to the customer of price
information associated with the at least one item
on the shopping list from each of the at least
one retail stores.

26.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the at least one
item comprises a plurality of items.

27.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the at least one
retail store comprises a plurality of retail stores.

28.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the computer is
located remote from the at least one retail store.

29.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the computer is
coupled to the at least one retail store.

30.   The system of Claim 29, wherein the computer is coupled to the at least one retail store such that the computer program is further operable to detect substantially real-time product purchase information from the at least one retail store.

31.   The method of Claim 25, wherein the computer program is further operable to initiate communication by transmitting an electronic mail message for receipt by the customer.

32.   The method of Claim 25, wherein the computer program is further operable to

detect product purchase information of the at least one retail store on a substantially real-time basis.

33.   The system of Claim 25, wherein the shopping list is contained in an electronic mail message.

34.   The system of Claim 25, and further comprising the Internet connected to the computer, and wherein the computer program is further operable to receive the shopping list from the customer through the Internet.

35.   A system comprising:

at least one retail store comprising a point-of-sale for purchasing a plurality of products;   a remote host computer located remote from the retail store;

5   a substantially real-time communication link coupling the point-of-sale to the remote host computer; and

at least one customer computer in communication with the host computer by the Internet, the at least one customer computer operable to initiate transmission of a

10 shopping list comprising at least one item, the transmission for receipt by the remote host computer;

wherein the host computer comprises:

a processor;

a memory accessible by the processor; and

15   a computer program stored in the memory, the computer program operable to be executed on the processor and further operable to:

detect product purchase information received over the substantially real-time communication

20   link from the at least one retail store, the product purchase information including price information;

receive the shopping list including at least one item; and

25   in response to receiving the shopping list, initiate communication to the customer of price information associated with the at least one item on the shopping list for each of the at least one retail stores.

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36.   The system of Claim 35, and further comprising at least one third-party computer coupled to the remote host computer by the Internet, the third-party computer operable to receive the product purchase information from the remote host computer, and in response, generate an incentive for communication to at least one of the customer computers, the incentive associated with the at least one item.

37.   The system of Claim 35, wherein the computer program is further operable to transmit a sorted shopping list displaying the location of the at least one item in the at least one retail store.

38.   The system of Claim 35, wherein the point-of-sale comprises;

an electronic cash register;

a scanner for scanning bar codes on the plurality of products; and

a wedge disposed between the electronic cash register and the plurality of products, the wedge operable to transmit signals indicative of the bar codes from the scanner to both the electronic cash register and to the Internet.

39.   The system of Claim 35, and further comprising a World Wide Web site associated with the remote host computer, and wherein the World Wide Web site is operable to display price information associated with the at least one item on the shopping list.

40. A method for use in marketing, comprising:

receiving, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a retail store, the product purchase information including price information, the remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including a plurality of products;

transmitting the shopping list to a manufacturer;

receiving an incentive, from the manufacturer, for one of the products on the shopping list; and

initiating communication of the incentive to the customer.

41. The method of Claim 40, wherein initiating communication comprises transmitting an electronic mail message for receipt by the customer.

42. The method of Claim 40, wherein receiving, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, comprises receiving product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores on a substantially real-time basis.

43. The method of Claim 40, wherein receiving a shopping list of a customer comprises receiving an electronic mail message including a shopping list of the customer.

44. The method of Claim 40, wherein receiving a shopping list of a customer comprises receiving information from the customer over the Internet.

5   45. The method of Claim 44, wherein receiving information from the customer over the Internet comprises receiving information inputted into a web page associated with the remote computer.

10   46. The method of Claim 40, and further comprising storing product purchase information from the plurality of retail stores in association with customer identification numbers.

15   47. The method of Claim 46, and further comprising transmitting to the customer a proposed shopping list.

48. The method of Claim 47, wherein the proposed shopping list comprises products previously purchased by 20   the customer.

49. The method of Claim 48, wherein the proposed shopping list comprises products previously purchased by the customer in the customer's most recent shopping 25   transaction with one of the retail stores.

50. The method of Claim 40, and further comprising initiating, by the remote computer, communication of an incentive associated with at least one of the plurality of 30   products to the customer in response to receiving the shopping list.

51.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive comprises a discount on the at least one product.

52.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive comprises a discount on a product competitive with the at least one product.

53.   The method of Claim 52, and further comprises comparing, by the computer, the price of the at least one product at a first one of the plurality of retail stores to the price of the competitive product at the first retail store, the price of the at least one product and the competitive product determined from the product purchase information, and wherein the incentive comprises a discount sufficient to lower the effective price on the competitive product to match or beat the price of the at least one product.

54.   The method of Claim 52, wherein the price of the competitive item comprises the price at which the competitive item was purchased within an hour of the receipt of the shopping list.

55.   The method of Claim 50, and further comprising comparing, by the computer, the price of the at least one product at a first one of the plurality of retail stores to the lowest price at which the at least one product was

5   purchased from the first retail store within a predetermined time period, the lowest price determined from the product purchase information, and wherein the incentive comprises a discount sufficient to lower the effective price at the first retail store on the at least one product

10   to match or beat the lowest price.

56.   The method of Claim 55, wherein the predetermined time period is approximately one hour from the receipt of the shopping list.

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57.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive comprises a redeemable coupon.

58.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive

20   comprises a notification of a future electronic discount.

59.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive comprises a redeemable coupon on a product determined to be a product more frequently purchased by the customer than

25   other products purchased by the customer.

60.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive is based on prior purchases of the customer.

30   61.   The method of Claim 50, wherein the incentive is based on the shopping list.

62.   The method of Claim 61, wherein the incentive comprises a discount on a product associated with the at least one item.

5   63.   The method of Claim 62, wherein the product is a companion product to the at least one item.

64. A system comprising:

a point-of-sale at which a plurality of products are purchased from a retail store;

a remote host computer located remote from the retail store;

a substantially real-time communication link coupling the point-of-sale to the remote host computer and for providing product purchase information from the point-of-sale to the remote host computer on a substantially real-time basis;

at least one customer computer in communication with the remote host computer, the at least one customer computer operable to initiate transmission of a shopping list comprising at least one of the plurality of products, the transmission for receipt by the remote host computer;

wherein the remote host computer further comprises:

a processor;

a memory accessible by the processor; and

a computer program stored in the memory, the computer program operable to be executed on the processor and further operable to:

receive the shopping list from the customer computer;

initiate transmission of at least one product on the shopping list to the third-party computer;

receive an incentive from the third-party computer associated with the at least one product; and

initiate communication of the incentive to the customer computer; and

a third-party computer operable to generate an incentive for the at least one product and communicate the incentive to the remote host computer.

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65. A system for use with a retail store having a point-of-sale at which a plurality of products are purchased, at least one customer computer operable to initiate transmission of a shopping list comprising at least one of the plurality of products, the transmission for receipt by the remote host computer, and a third-party computer operable to generate an incentive for the at least one product and communicate the incentive to the remote host computer, the system comprising:

a remote host computer located remote from the retail store and coupled to the point-of-sale by a substantially real-time communication link, the remote host computer operable to receive product purchase information from the point-of-sale to the remote host computer on a substantially real-time basis, the remote host computer further comprising:

a processor;

a memory accessible by the processor; and

a computer program stored in the memory, the computer program operable to be executed on the processor and further operable to:

receive the shopping list from the customer computer;

initiate transmission of at least one product on the shopping list to the third-party computer;

receive an incentive from the third-party computer associated with the at least one product; and

initiate communication of the incentive to the customer computer.

66.   The system of Claim 65, wherein the at least one item comprises a plurality of items.

67.   The system of Claim 65, wherein the at least one retail store comprises a plurality of retail stores.

68.   The system of Claim 65, wherein the computer program is further operable to initiate communication by transmitting an electronic mail message for receipt by the customer.

69.   The method of Claim 65, wherein the computer program is further operable to
detect product purchase information of the at least one retail store on a substantially real-time basis.

70.   The system of Claim 65, wherein the shopping list is contained in an electronic mail message.

71.   The system of Claim 65, and further comprising the Internet connected to the computer, and wherein the computer program is further operable to receive the shopping list from the customer through the Internet.

72.   A method for use in marketing, comprising:

detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, the product purchase information including price information, the
5   remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including an item;

comparing, by the computer, the price of the item at a first one of the plurality of retail stores to the price
10   of a competitive item at the first retail store, the competitive item competitive with the item, the price of the competitive item and the item at the first retail store determined from the product purchase information,

generating an incentive comprising a discount
15   sufficient to lower the effective price on the competitive item at the first retail store to match or beat the price of the item at the first retail store; and

in response to generating the incentive, initiating communication of the incentive to the customer by the
20   remote computer.

73.   The method of Claim 72, wherein detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information comprises detecting product purchase information on a substantially
25   real-time basis.

74.   The method of Claim 71, and further comprising transmitting data relative to the incentive to the first retail store for application upon purchase of the
30   competitive item by the customer from the retail store.

75.   The method of Claim 71, and further comprising storing the product purchase information in association with customer identification numbers.

5   76.   The method of Claim 75, and further comprising determining from the stored product purchase information that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.

10   77.   The method of Claim 76, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at any of the retail stores within a predetermined time period.

15   78   The method of Claim 77, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at the first retail store.

        79.   The method of Claim 76, wherein generating an
20 incentive comprises generating an incentive in response to determining that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.

80. A method for use in marketing, comprising:

detecting, at a computer, product purchase information of a retail store, the product purchase information including price information;

5   receiving, at the computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including an item;

comparing, by the computer, the price of the item at the retail store to the price of a competitive item at the retail store, the competitive item competitive with the item, the price of the competitive item and the item determined from the product purchase information,

generating an incentive comprising a discount sufficient to lower the effective price on the competitive item to match or beat the price of the item; and

15   in response to generating the incentive, initiating communication of the incentive to the customer by the remote computer.

81. The method of Claim 80, wherein detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information comprises detecting product purchase information on a substantially real-time basis.

82. The method of Claim 81, and further comprising transmitting data relative to the incentive to the retail store for application upon purchase of the competitive item by the customer from the retail store.

83. The method of Claim 81, and further comprising storing the product purchase information in association with customer identification numbers.

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84. The method of Claim 83, and further comprising determining from the stored product purchase information that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.

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85. The method of Claim 84, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at any of the retail stores within a predetermined time period.

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86. The method of Claim 84, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at the first retail store.

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87. The method of Claim 84, wherein generating an incentive comprises generating an incentive in response to determining that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.

88.   A method for use in marketing, comprising:

detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, the product purchase information including price information, the remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including at least one item;

comparing, by the computer, the price of the at least one item to the lowest price at which the at least one item was purchased from a first one of the plurality of retail stores within a predetermined time period, the lowest price determined from the product purchase information, and wherein the incentive comprises a discount sufficient to lower the effective price on the item at the first one of the retail stores to match or beat the lowest price; and

in response to generating the incentive, initiating communication of the incentive to the customer by the remote computer.

89.   The method of Claim 88, wherein detecting, at a remote computer, product purchase information comprises detecting product purchase information on a substantially real-time basis.

90.   The method of Claim 88, and further comprising transmitting data relative to the incentive to the first retail store for application upon purchase of the competitive item by the customer from the retail store.

91. The method of Claim 88, and further comprising storing the product purchase information in association with customer identification numbers.

5   92. The method of Claim 91, and further comprising determining from the stored product purchase information that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.

10   93. The method of Claim 92, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at any of the retail stores within a predetermined time period.

15   94. The method of Claim 93, wherein the predetermined shopping history criteria comprises a dollar amount spent by the customer at the first retail store.

95. The method of Claim 94, wherein generating an
20   incentive comprises generating an incentive in response to determining that the customer meets a predetermined shopping history criteria.